



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: August 3, 2005

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VI: Consideration of resolution authorizing a Cooperative Agreement with the California Department of Transportation for the purpose of planning and implementing recommendations defined in the Draft Arroyo Seco Parkway National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a Cooperative Agreement with the California Department of Transportation for the purpose of planning and implementing recommendations defined in the Draft Arroyo Seco Parkway National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan.

Background: The Arroyo Seco Parkway was designated a National Scenic Byway in 2002. The designation recognizes the historic, cultural, natural and recreational intrinsic qualities along the historic parkway. In 2001, the MRCA began work with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy on a Scenic Byways Corridor Management Plan (CMP) for the Arroyo Seco Parkway. The Draft CMP was completed in 2004, but has yet to be adopted by Caltrans.

Funding from the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program was recently allocated to Caltrans for two grants that will begin to implement the CMP, and Caltrans requested that MRCA administer the grants. A Cooperative Agreement has been drafted for this purpose, and will include two amendments describing the grants and MRCA's responsibilities.

The first grant is for \$25,000 to create a non-profit Byway Organization. This grant can be renewed for \$25,000 per year for four years. The Byway Organization will be a non-profit organization focused on successful implementation of the CMP, and will become the primary point of contact for community groups, public agencies, and

byway travelers. The project will fund hiring a part-time director to establish the organization, create a governing board, create strategic, financial, and long-term plans, and build relationships with byway supporters. Because the Parkway corridor runs through several jurisdictions, there is not an existing agency that is well suited to lead implementation of the CMP. The Board of Directors of the Byway Organization will include representatives of local advocacy groups.

The second grant is for \$336,400 for the development of a Comprehensive Visitor Interpretation and Marketing Plan. This was one of the largest allocations made in this round of national funding and one of only two projects funded in California. The project will include audience research, an inventory of interpretive assets, development of interpretive themes, and creation of an interpretive plan and design guidelines. Public outreach activities planned include a kick-off meeting, research with focus groups and phone surveys, public meetings of the Interpretive Plan Steering Committee, and outreach to regional umbrella organizations such as the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, the City of Los Angeles' Ad Hoc River Committee, the Council of Arroyo Seco Agencies, the Council of Arroyo Seco Organizations, ArroyoFest, chambers of commerce, and the convention and visitor bureaus of the cities within the corridor.

Both grants require a 20% match, which will be provided by in-kind services from several local organizations. Copies of the grant applications are attached. The MRCA will retain a portion of the grants for administration and project management costs.